



OP-ED

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New Jersey: A Statewide View of Diversity

23 Short Years

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As the most racially and ethnically diverse state in the country, New Jersey faces unique opportunities and challenges to create inclusive communities, a productive workforce, a responsive educational system, bias-free institutions and a respectful society.

The recent American Conference on Diversity survey, *New Jersey: A Statewide View of Diversity*, shows New Jersey residents' attitudes, behaviors and opinions about many issues in our state relative to diversity – how much social interaction we have with people who are different from us, how we value those differences and how we feel about societal issues developing because we have an increasingly diverse population.

The survey results and messages are clear and in some cases positive; they also indicate we face many challenges.

By a strong majority 76% of New Jerseyans said they have close friendships and relationships with people from different races, ethnicities and religions. Generally, we have made good progress since a survey measured similar issues 10 years ago.

Yet the changes in our state are accelerating and with population growth coming from non-whites, the current 63% white majority will be markedly decreased in the next many years. By 2030, demographers project New Jersey will be a state which is a “majority of minorities,” that there will be no clear majority population in the state.

We don't have to be pundits to know that this growing diversity will be a powerful and, I suggest, a positive force for our businesses, workplaces, schools and communities. How should and will we move ahead considering this new dynamic?

The young people in our high schools and colleges and entering the workforce now will be leading multi-cultural, multi-racial and multi-ethnic groups of employees. Our businesses, schools and communities need to plan for and adapt to these changes – now, if they haven't already. The diversity and inclusion training and systems we put in place now need to set us in the right direction.

The impact on all of us is already and will continue to be meaningful, in the purchasing power of non-whites. According to DiversityInc, the projected increase in U.S. buying power from 1990 to 2011 is 457% for Latinos, 267% for Asians, 173% for Native Americans, 151% for Blacks and 114% for Whites. We already see this trend playing out in our more diverse communities. Dining out can be a trip around the world. Our state's demographics are a microcosm of the U.S. demographics and we are becoming a global society right here in New Jersey.

As the American Conference on Diversity focuses its work on valuing diversity, educating leaders and promoting respect, we are proud to have led a group of presenting partners in conducting the *New Jersey: A Statewide View of Diversity* survey to measure the impact of diversity in our state, and to begin the conversation on a large scale as to what we know and what needs to be done for the state to reach its potential.

We believe that New Jersey's diversity is a significant asset for our state that can and should be used to the best advantage of our residents and our civic, governmental, business and educational communities.

We have heard the phrase "The Future is Now" in advertising for fancy new products and services. In the case of New Jersey, the current demographics and developing trends say the same.

The 23 years to 2030 isn't a long time at all.